For Arthur Bushby . . . . . He Died at 41

LIFE LOST SAVOR

By JAMES K. NESBITT

ARTHUR BUSHBY reached Victoria on Christmas Day of 1858 and a few days later he was a guest in the home of Governor and Mrs. James Douglas. There he met his future wife.

Bushby wrote in his diary: "New Year's evening to the Douglas house—and a very jolly evening we had. Sang 'Goodbye Sweetheart,' played cards—Brew, Bob (Burnaby) Miss Aggie Douglas and I—they say she looks with no savage eye on me, and true she is a stunning girl—dark eye and hair—and somewhat larky, I should say—half a mind to go in for her. Governor very civil—met Mr. and Mrs. W. A. G. Young—walked home with Begbie."

But let us go back to the Christmas Day when Bushby reached these shores in the vessel Panama from San Francisco, after having crossed the Atlantic to New York, and then traveled to Panama, and so up this coast.

The Bushby diary says for Dec. 25, 1858: "Here we are in Esquimalt Harbor, V.I. Christmas Eve we had a regular musical bout, finishing up by the purser bringing in a bowl of whisky punch.

"Vancouver Island, from the seacoast, looks like the Scotch coast—fir trees to the water's edge—Esquimalt harbor is quite landlocked — HMS Satellite, Plumper and some merchantmen are anchored and lots of native canoes paddling about with long-haired, flat-faced Indians—some fishing."

Bushby came ashore: "We were landed at a rough wharf, bag and baggage, and some of us adjourned to the only visible grog shop and drank a merry Christmas in a glass of excellent Scotch whisky. Knocked about the harbor and wharf all day. Shot a gull. At last a little steamer came round from Victoria and took us all on board—we packing our own trunks on our shoulders, and away we steamed for Victoria, getting there at dusk.

It was Christmas night, and Bushby, young and handsome, full of fun and excitement at being in the New Land, of good voice and compelling personality, was not one to sit sadly and wait for adventure. He made it himself. He rallied shipmates and new-found friends about him: "Landed on a wharf, we wended our way to the Hotel de France, and bunked on the floor with Haines, two others in the same room—much astonished at the size of the town.

"On getting to the hotel we determined to have a good Christmas dinner, happen what might—so, some 12 of us sat down—12 bottles of ale—what a treat the beer was, and how we enjoyed ourselves. After dinner we adjourned to a large saloon, and regaled ourselves with hot whisky punch, and saw a number of rough-looking miners.

"Next morning Burnaby and I went to church—heard a rather decent bass voice in the choir—it was Begbie, whom I met coming out of church. He seemed glad to see me—He then introduced me to the clergyman, and to Mr. Pemberton and then to a Mr. Brew, who made me acquainted with a Mr. Crease, a barrister living next door to the hotel."

A few days later came Bushby's first call on James Douglas: "Presented my letters to the Governor. He received me kindly, and before I left invited me to dinner that evening—I went and met Mr. and Mrs. Dallas, two Miss Douglas, Begbie and Capt. Gossett. A very pleasant evening, and a good dinner—music and cards—got on very well with them all—the governor seemed a jolly brick. One of his daughters is very pretty—the other I should say bad-tempered. Mrs. Dallas (Jane Douglas) is a jolly little woman—walked home with Begbie, with whom I am capital friends.

"The mud is something awful here—we go about in knee boots—they are never cleaned—trousers tucked into them—the streets are not yet lighted, so a lantern is indispensable of a night."

New Year's Eve of 1858 was a bachelor affair: "After dinner—polished off no end of hot whisky punch, returned to the hotel, where more punch was being handed round. Went into Crease's, and drank the New Year in there. There were some half dozen of us in Crease's little room—round the welcome stove heat, the rain pelting outside, drinking and smoking away, and so the year 1859 was ushered in. At 1 o'clock we turned in, Elwyn and myself making our bed of buffalo robes."

BEGBIE AND BUSHBY soon found much in common, particularly singing: "Begbie gave me some music to look over to sing with him. We went to church together today, went to the organ loft and sang away—on coming out Begbie was commissioned by Miss Pemberton to ask me to tea—unfortunately I could not go—at the same time I met the Douglases and Aggie Douglas asked me to come home with them. Again I was obliged to refuse. Met Crease, Pearkes and so off to Esquimalt, having promised to dine with the Satellites."

ARTHUR BUSHBY . . . as a boy in England.

Soon young Arthur Bushby was a welcome guest in the homes of Victoria's most prominent citizens, mostly the Douglas home, where he and Miss Agnes appeared to be getting along famously.

"Invitations come fast and thick—governor's yesterday — Cridge's today — governor's on Saturday."

Just about every day now, Bushby was at the Douglas home:

"Last night I had a quiet evening alone at the governor's—very kind to me, and the girls very jolly—they have bound all my music. Invited there again on Tuesday."

Another diary note: "Yesterday afternoon took a walk on Beacon Hill, gun on shoulder. Met Mrs. Douglas—joined her, and went to the governor's."

Arthur Bushby was in on the founding of Victoria's first musical organization, in January of 1859: "Dined at the French Hotel—with Pearse—champagne in abundance. Good fun; afterwards went with him to Franklin's, where there was a meeting to form rules for the Victoria Philharmonic Society. Folks seem to have been puffing up my musical abilities, for I was received with open arms by some 30 fellows, and after business they drank the health of Mr. Bushby and the Philharmonic Society. Music until midnight—had a violin lent to me—sang 'Una Furtiva' — supper and champagne — rolled home at 2 a.m.

"Success to the Victoria Philharmonic Society."

Bushby soon left for New Westminster to take a position in the newly-formed government of the Crown Colony of British Columbia, but his courting of Agnes Douglas continued, and as often as he could, Bushby came to Victoria.

THE COURTING went on more than three years, and in May of 1862 Arthur T. Bushby and Agnes Douglas were married:

"Today we celebrated the nuptials of Mr. Arthur T. Bushby, registrar-general of British Columbia, and Agnes, daughter of His Excellency, Governor Douglas. The ceremony was performed at Christ Church by the Rt. Rev. Lord Bishop of Columbia, assisted by the Rev. Messrs. Cridge and Sheepshanks.

"The bride was attired in white, with veil and wreath of white flowers, and was given away by her father. The bridesmaids, comprising the mystical number of seven, were dressed in white, some with pink, some with blue trimmings; we regret, for the sake of our lady readers our want of capacity to particularize. We give their names: the two Misses Wigam, the two Misses Mackenzie, Misses Dodd, Trutch and Wright.

"After the wedding the party retired to the Hotel de France to partake of the sumptuous breakfast prepared, whence the happy couple proceeded to Belmont, where they will pass the honeymoon."

Before the end of May Bushby had taken his wife to New Westminster.

And now we jump ahead 11 years to 1873, and that year Mrs. Bushby and her children went off on a trip to England, leaving poor Bushby disconsolate.

As often as he could he came to Victoria to be with members of the Douglas family, or they went to visit him at New Westminster.

Here are notes from his 1873 diary: "Alice and Jim up with me for a week. Queen's birthday—I gave a lunch to a crowd at the office, and addressed the Indians from the balcony, stating why Dr. Powell, Indian agent, was not there. Glad to escape—canoe races, etc.—and ball in the evening, played violin and piano—tired—no more spirits for me."

Next day: "Seedy owing to ball—got no sleep."

A few days later: "Jim, Alice and Helen left for Otter—so sorry to lose my visitors—quarters looked like a home while they were here, now only a habitation. Dull is no word for how I feel—passed evening playing piano, violin, reading and writing—feel intensely dull—how I miss my visitors—Case of ale in."

The sadness would not leave Bushby: "Suffering from my dissiptation. Want of sleep knocks me out. Hard work to ge through my Sunday duties."

"Still seedy, low spirited and angry with myself. Wish I were in England. Wrote partially to dear Agnes—walked to cemetery to Sutro—arranged baby's grave—in the evening wrote again to dear Agnes—played piano and read—feel happier—nothing like occupation for the mind to dispel depressing spirits."

YES, BUSHBY felt better, because he was off to spend a few weeks in Victoria, and he had a fine time:

"Victoria—beautiful trip—Miss Irving, a passenger, and Major Elwyn and Claudet met me at the steamer—afterwards went for a walk to Beacon Hill—and then home to James Bay—all seemed glad to see me. Then to the post office, where found letters from dear Agnes—a little low-spirited from contents."

"Paid calls on Governor, Judge Gray, with Elwyn, Pender, May Elliott, Amy and three carriage and went down to Esquimalt with Alice and Jim—lunched on board HMS Tinedos—Capt. Rae—then went with him ashore and played croquet on his new lawn."

"Went for a drive with Sir James and Alice. Called on Finlaysons and Tolmies."

"In the evening called on Pembertons with Lady Douglas and Alice—Mrs. Pemberton very kind."

"Picnic up the Gorge—Mr. Starr, Alice, Jim, Elwyn, Pender, May Elliott, Amy and three children—reached home about 10 p.m.—dined in the kitchen with Alice and Jim—smoked, and to bed at midnight, tired out."

"Went to Pemberton's—Lady Douglas, Alice and I—not prepared to see us, so rather unpleasant—came away soon—drove round Beacon Hill and home."

"Picnic at Macaulay's Point — Mrs. Sprague, Mrs. Starr, Mrs. Elliott, May, Alice, Penedr, Jim, Elwyn, Elliott, Capt. Butler—hard day and did not enjoy myself a bit—last picnic I ever go to."

"Musical party at Begbdie's—took Alice there, Sutro and his wife, Cornwall, Capt. Carew, HMS Repulse, Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes."

"Took Alice, Tommy, Dolly and Helen in boat to Esquimalt—lanched on water."

"Dr. Tolmie's picnic, Langford Lake—number of people there. Drove down with Sir James, Alice, Amy and children."

"Party at Mrs. Rhodes—took Alice, and played for dancing—called in at Dr. Matthews on way home—late—no great fun for me, as I hate dances."

And then back to New Westminster, where once again Bushby was plunged into gloom, so lonely was he for his wife and children: "Dull, dull, dull at New Westminster. Only wish Agnes were here—can't stand this much longer—killed day as best I could."

Mrs. Bushby came back the next year, and the year after that, 1875, when he was 41, Bushby died.

Mrs. Bushby lived on until 1928 when she died at 87.